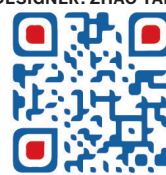


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The interior in art

China's vast western interior has fascinated artists for more than a century. Many scholars and artists have traveled there to learn from its unique blend of Central Asian custom and Chinese tradition.

The National Art Museum of China is exhibiting its collection of the most influential paintings by the last century of artists who traveled west through January 19.

Page 6



Infant 'drop box' has moralists cringing

Page 2



Bitcoin 'dead in China' for next five years

Page 3



Artist's work so dark, it could be goth

Pages 4-5

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Drop sites for unwanted children make abandonment too easy

By ZHAO HONGYI
Beijing Today Staff

Last August, the city of Shijiazhuang became China's first to open a government-supported orphanage for abandoned infants – a decision that has drawn the ire of many activists.

Critics say the mere existence of such a home could be encouraging people to adhere to an old Chinese tradition of abandoning sickly or unwanted children to the elements.

But the homes seem to have a prominent position on the government's 2014 agenda. The Shijiazhuang Abandoned Kids Home has already inspired similar centers in Nanjing, Xi'an and Shenzhen.

Dump and run

Lao Kong was on duty at 7 pm on December 18 when he heard his phone vibrate. It was unusually early for a visitor. When he stepped outside, he saw two men running away from an infant they had left on the steps.

"I don't know why they run," he said. "Do they think I can arrest them?"

Lao Kong picked up the infant and took it back inside the Shijiazhuang Abandoned Kids Home where he works. He spent the next two hours caring for it.

Shijiazhuang, capital of Hebei Province, is first city to open a government home stocked with diapers, baby formula and bottles for receiving abandoned infants. Lao Kong said the home receives as many as four infants each night.

Although the night's new arrival appeared normal at first glance, Lao Kong soon discovered the boy had a pitted skull and was choking on his own saliva: signs of severe cerebral palsy.

Xiao Yang, who was also on staff that night, asked what kind of parents would



The exterior of an infant drop site in Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province.

BQB Photos

abandon their own children.

"No parent wants to abandon their child. It only happens if there is no hope of a cure," Lao Kong said.

The home has received more than 300 infants during the last six months.

Lao Kong's hope

But is the government really encouraging people to abandon their infants?

"Our goal was to give the infants a better chance to survive," said Han Jinhong, principal of the welfare house. "Before our mission was public, two thirds of the children were dying of exposure to the elements before we could find them. That rate has fallen greatly."

Most parents still feel ashamed to give up their children.

Lao Kong said one time there were two



Rescue centers are stocked to provide basic support to infants.

children abandoned during the time it took him to go outside and buy breakfast.

On December 18, a woman from Beijing surnamed Li visited the welfare house to adopt a child. When she learned that all 300 were sickly, she abandoned her plan

and went home.

"These infants really belong with their families," said Lao Kong. He said he would prefer to see the government offer financial support to help the families cover their children's medical costs. "A plan like that would really cut down on the rate of abandonment."

More homes in Nanjing

Nanjing has followed a different model. Rather than one central house for receiving unwanted children, it operates 100 small centers throughout the city.

Nanjing's network has received nine disabled infants since December 10, as well as another 16 children transferred from other welfare homes.

Zhu Hong, a police officer, maintains one of the rescue homes.

"We have set up so many welfare homes in this city. Why is the government opening all these wayposts to make it more convenient for people to abandon their children?" Zhu said. "This is just asking for trouble."

While abandoning infants is a criminal act, the country has never once charged someone with abandonment.

"People still don't recognize this is a crime, so no one wants to hand down any penalties," Zhu said.

Critics say the small homes amount to empty posturing by government officials to show how "hard" they are working for the welfare of abandoned infants.

"They should really be focusing on the economic development of their cities and ensuring that growth actually goes into the hands of the public," said Wang Jun, a professor at Peking University.

An enriched populace with better access to medical care would be less inclined to abandon sickly children, he said.

City breaks ground on more subway lines

By ZHAO HONGYI
Beijing Today Staff

Beijing will break ground on subway Lines 3, 12 and 17, as well as a new airport line, this year.

Beijing Railway Transportation Construction announced Line 3 will start from Tiancun Village in the west and end in Dongba, extending the existing Line 6. The eastern part of Line 3 will cross through Ping'an Avenue and the western part through Fuchengmen Avenue.

Line 12 will start from Siliqiao in the west and end at Guanggezhuang in Dongba. The line will mostly follow North Third Ring Road.

Line 17 will run east of Line 5, from Future Science Park Station in the north, along Beijing-Chengde Highway, and



Subway construction grows more efficient each year.

CFP Photos

passing through Wangjing, Xiangheyuan and Dongdaqiao to Yezhuang Station in the south.

The 50-kilometer New Airport Subway Line will have only five stops at Mudanyuan, Financial Street, Caoqiao, Nayuan and the New Airport stations.

The maximum speed will reach 120 kilometers per hour. Passengers will be able to book a seat 24 hours in advance.

With 23 kilometers of track scheduled for this year, 2014 will not break the subway construction record set last year.

The most recent subway line is Line 8, which opened December 28 and added five new stations to the network.

By 2015, Beijing will operate an additional 62 kilometers of subway, bringing the total subway length to 527 kilometers.

Bitcoin 'dead to China' for the next five years



Li Qiyuan, CEO of BTC China, encourages investors to speculate on the coin.

By ZHAO HONGYI
Beijing Today Staff

The past three years have seen an explosion of digital currencies such as Bitcoin, Litecoin, Peercoin and, perhaps the most absurd, Dogecoin.

But their use to pay for real world goods and services like homes, cars and food has alarmed many of the world's governments.

On December 5, the Chinese government's anti-Bitcoin stance sparked a downward spiral that caused the currency to lose more than 400 percent of its value and pushed suicide hotlines into the top position of many Bitcoin trading forums.

Bitcoin bubble

The first Chinese Bitcoin exchange, BTC China, opened in Shanghai in 2012 to promote awareness of the coin and persuade Chinese banks and financial institutions to accept Bitcoin. Its first clients were risky investors it encouraged to deposit private capital in exchange for Bitcoins.

For speculators, the advantages were clear: Bitcoin could be used to directly pay for real-world goods, and the peer-to-peer nature made it impossible to freeze or tax Bitcoin accounts.

It was also impossible to track, unlike Tencent's QQ coins, China's most popular avenue for money laundering and black market trade.

Bitcoins are created by solving computation-intensive mathematical problems that grow more difficult over time. This slow release of new currency into the pool was designed as a natural way to fight inflation.

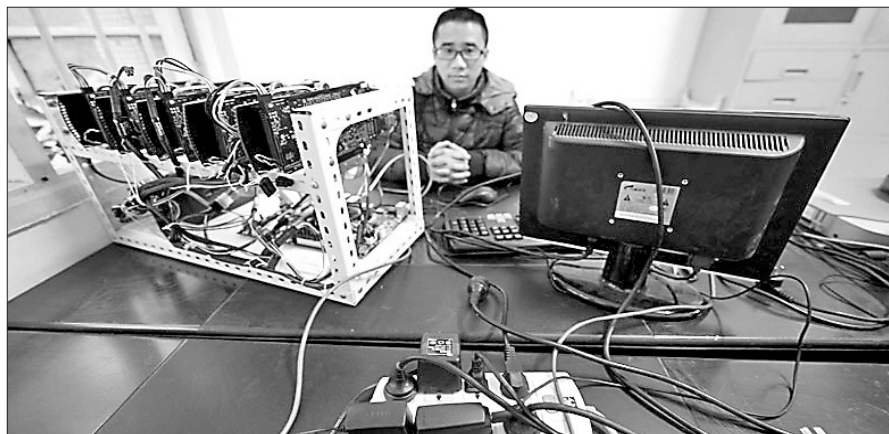
Around the middle of 2013, BTC China became more active in packaging and promoting Bitcoin to China's armchair investors. Legions of middle-aged women rushed to pour their savings into the currency. Their investments accounted for 40 percent of the new money that entered the Bitcoin market last year.

Convinced of its future, Qiao Shouwu a financial worker in Zhejiang Province, invested more than 90,000 yuan to pur-



Bitcoin was wildly popular with Chinese speculators during the last quarter of 2013.

CFP Photos



Feng Yupeng, a Bitcoin enthusiast in Chongqing, has invested heavily to build a computer capable of mining new coins.

chase Bitcoins on October 22.

The next day, he was unable to open the seller's website. When it remained offline, Zhang knew something was wrong and called the police.

"My parents heard what happened and were disappointed in my investment," said Qiao, who remains optimistic about the future of his Bitcoin holdings.

A hard stance

But Qiao's optimism may be misplaced given the government's stance.

On December 5, five ministries under the central government issued a notice warning speculators to be careful about putting their yuan in the Bitcoin basket.

The initial reaction was positive, as many investors believed the central government meant to keep the banks and security brokers out of the market. But days later, the People's Bank of China clarified its stance.

The government ordered all financial service providers to keep a distance from Bitcoin and to prevent its conversion into Chinese yuan or any other

standard currency.

Li Qiyuan, CEO of Bitcoin China, said the move was a gross misunderstanding of modern finance.

"We have to allow these digital currencies to float to better understand what role they can play," Li said.

China is not the first country to oppose digital currencies. During 2013, Thailand, South Korea, France, Norway and Denmark all spoke out against Bitcoin transactions and denied its existence as real money.

Aside from the US, Germany and UK, Bitcoin appears to be under attack worldwide.

That stance has been reflected in the exchange rate of Bitcoin, which lost more than 400 percent of its value - down from more than 8,000 yuan per coin - during the final three weeks of the year.

"Bitcoin is like putting your money in stocks and futures. No one ever feels like a shareholder," said "BTC wealthier," a netizen who allegedly holds a large amount of the coins.

"Anyone who has put money in the stocks and futures should be used to this kind of fluctuation."

Dead to China for now

But Bitcoin may have a hard time breaking away from its shady background.

The currency gained traction in its early years thanks to sites like SilkRoad, a black market for drugs and other illegal materials that conducted transactions entirely in Bitcoin. Its untraceable nature makes it a frequent target of scammers and fraudsters.

Moreover, the coin has nothing to guarantee its value.

Bitcoin advocates say the same can be said of all modern currencies: even the US dollar after US President Richard Nixon ended its convertibility to gold in 1971. But most world currencies are at the very least backed up by the word of a government.

The US dollar and Chinese yuan may be experiencing inflation, but digital currencies are not the answer, the ministries said.

"Bitcoin fever has all the characteristics of a classic Ponzi Scheme," the five ministries said in their joint notice. "We cannot support allowing individuals to become tied up in this matter."

The harsh message dragged down the performance of both Peercoin and Litecoin, with only the community driven Dogecoin showing profits during the final weeks of 2013.

Analysts say Bitcoin has almost no chance of recovering in China during the next five years.

However, if Bitcoin continues to circulate abroad and displaces the US dollar as a strong, reliable currency, the government would be forced to reevaluate its stance, analysts said.

Endless darkness

Falling in



Suicide Video: 1990



"No title" series



Little Forest



Smoke

By ANNIE WEI
Beijing Today Staff

Young artist Jin Shan creates without a plan. His work is abstract, simple, direct and violent.

"Abyss," his solo exhibition of dark and depressing works, is open at Platform China through next month.

Jin describes his painting style as "excited" when compared to his weary approach to everything else.

His videos focus on intense violence and physical pain: "Suicide Video: 1990" shows 12 continuous frames of a person jumping to his death.

The disturbing short was inspired by local story about one young man, allegedly a masturbation addict, who killed himself. Jin said he was inspired to wonder what life events would push someone to such a final decision.

Pain is hard to explain: physical pain is usually abstract and there's no simple expression of loneliness and suffering, he said.

Given the nature of the works, Abyss is a fitting name. "This exhibition is about not wanting to live or not having any way to live. Either you die or I die," he said.

Jin was born in 1976 and develops much of his creation through writing or narration.

He uses video, photography, voice recordings and paintings to discuss current topics until landing on one that inspires him to draw on his personal experiences and modern history.

The works contained in Abyss are intended to be part of a movie that he has been working on since 2012.

Abyss is Jin's second exhibition at Platform China. His first exhibition in 2010 contained "One Man's Island," a two-part work that brought him to the attention of critics.

The first half of the work was 50 diary-like segments shot at his studio; the second half was a long article he was working on.

The project took a year and a half to complete, during which Jin forced himself to complete a new piece every few days. The process and workload left Jin isolated in his studio: a man living alone on an island.

Abyss: Jin Shan Solo Exhibition

Where: Platform China Contemporary Art Institute, 319-1 Caochangdi Village, Chaoyang District

When: Through February 28

Tel: 6432 0091

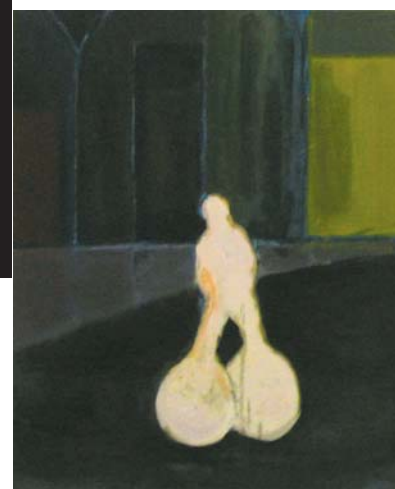


Door



Video: Meaning of life

Loss and pain to Jin Shan's Abyss



Light and the yawning void of creation

By ANNIE WEI
Beijing Today Staff

Giovanni Ozzola, a 32-year-old Italian artist who works in light and vision, is hosting his first solo exhibition at Gallery Continua.

Titled "La Theorie des Cometes," the exhibition includes photographs, objects and videos designed to inspire a sense of wonder at the tininess of the individual within the endless cosmos.

The exhibition starts with a half-open door through which viewers adapt to the darkness and intimacy.

The first installation encountered is an enormous map on which Ozzola engraved the lines of ancient sea routes. The engraving technique he used is centuries old and designed to capture the early adventurous spirit of Christopher Columbus, Vasco da Gama, Megellan and Zheng He – astronomers and navigators who aimed to conquer the unknown.

The main hall has three projection screens that show how the Earth was formed in a dark place with light and wind. At the other side of the hall is an old jute rope, a symbol of life, death and rebirth. A nearby shipwreck is marked with a sign that reads "Rising every time we fall."

Transparent and crystalline globes hang in the air, as the artist specializes in lighting. For Ozzola, light is the hope that helps us overcome insecurity or fear and advance into the future.

Other works include ancient bells and mountainous landscapes. It's up to the viewer to discern their meaning.

La Theorie Des Cometes by Giovanni Ozzola

Where: Galleria Continua, #8503, Dashanzi 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Through April 20, 2014

Tel: 5978 9505



Lighting globes



Video



Bronze map with engraved lines

Photos by Wei Ying

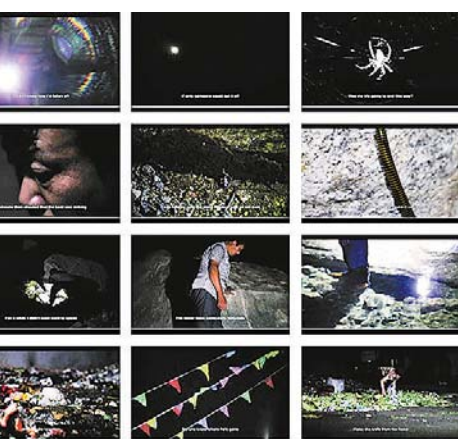


Photo provided by Platform Beijing

Art as a record of the interior's development



Mongolian women at the Natamu Festival

By **ZHAO HONGYI**
Beijing Today Staff

The National Art Museum of China is exhibiting the beauty – both natural and human – of China's western interior. Titled "Go to the West," the exhibition collects many images of China's least developed region.

The vast western interior is the traditional home of many ethnic groups, although China's Han ethnic majority has also lived there for thousands of years.

It's only recently that China's wealthier coastal regions have discovered the beauty and potential of the interior.

The last century saw three major waves of east-west migration into Tibet, Xinjiang, Qinghai, Ningxia and Gansu.

The first was led by the scholar artists of the 1930s and 1940s. These painters and philosophers were drawn to the splendid traditions and texts of ancient Central Asian religions. Some settled in the desert provinces to escape from war, which had engulfed much of the country since the fall of the Qing Dynasty.

Among this generation were the artists Zhang Daqian, Sun Zongwei, Chang Shuhong, Dong Xiwen, Citu Qiao, Han Leran, Pan Jizi and Ye Qianyu.

These pioneering artists walked into an incredible reservoir of human history: the western countryside was a region where Chinese traditions blended with the customs and habits of its minority groups and neighbors.

The works of this generation remain some of the best records of pre-modern life in the region.

A second wave came after the liberation, when the People's Liberation Army entered the west to free the farmers and uproot slave-based societies. Most of the works by this group of artists, almost all of whom are ethnic Hans, record the happy liberation and gratitude of the other ethnic groups.

These artists were born in the years of war. Their paintings reflect the emotions of newly freed slaves and people who have been liberated from generations of oppression.

The most notable artists of the era were Huang Zou, Dong Xiwen, Pan Shixun and Li Huanmin. They focused on the achievements of the minorities in culture, road construction, medical technology and health.

A third wave came after the reforms of the 1990s, when many artists went to the west to learn from the rich cultural traditions of the minorities.

These artists include Zhou Shaohua and Ding Fang, whose work updates accounts of minority life for the new era.

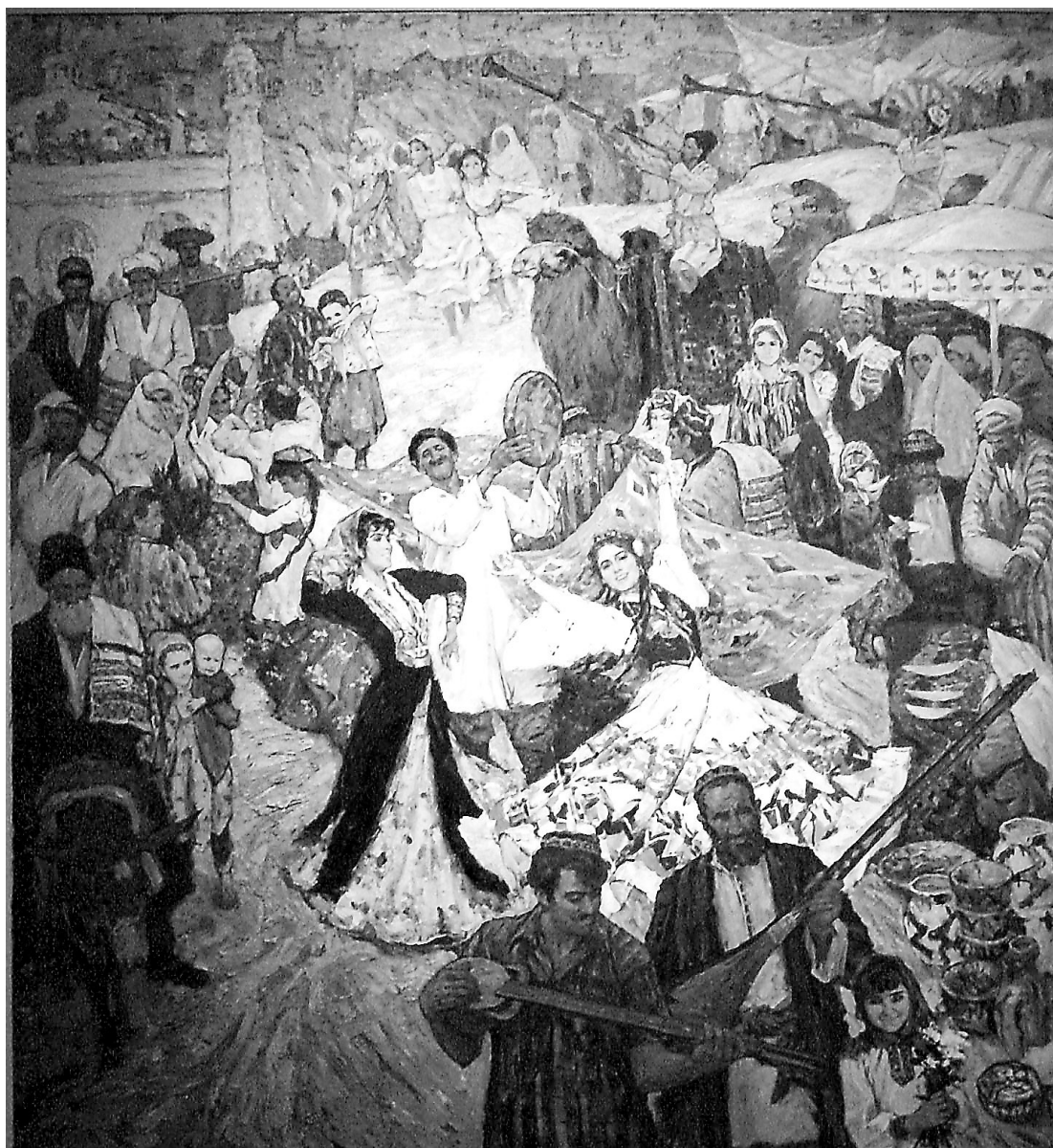
Go to the West

Where: National Art Museum of China (NAMOC), 1 Wusi Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 9 am - 4 pm through January 19, 2014

Tel: 6400 6326

Web: namoc.org

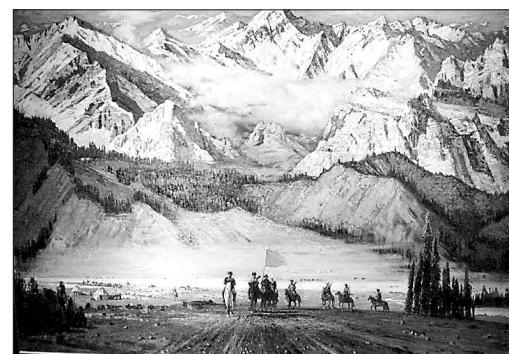


Gathering of Uyghur People

Photos by Zhao Hongyi



Monk and His Dog



Liberation



Tibetan People

By ANNIE WEI
Beijing Today Staff

This week, *Beijing Today* recommends the go-to teas popular among less sophisticated drinkers.

Tea time!



Rooibos for health

Put down that cup of coffee! There are plenty of hot drinks that offer the pleasant flavor of strong afternoon tea without the caffeine.

A new independent brand Smash A Cup is importing Rooibos from South Africa.

Known as a healthy “tea” for children, pregnant women and the elderly, Rooibos is made from a plant in the legume family that aids sleep and relaxation.

Before Smash A Cup arrived, there were only one or two Rooibos brands available on the market through high-end supermarkets like BG.

“Many people don’t know there are different grades of Rooibos quality in South Africa,” said Zhang Yipeng, founder of the brand who has studied and lived in South Africa for many years.

“Good Rooibos should taste smooth and full-bodied without anything astringent,” she said.

Zhang decided to develop a Rooibos brand for the Chinese market. So far, her Smash A Cup has three flavors: original (69 yuan) and honeybush (69 yuan) and vanilla (79 yuan).

Honeybush is a sibling of Rooibos cultivated in South Africa. It tastes like Rooibos but sweeter, with a smooth and gentle roasted flavor.

The Rooibos vanilla tastes rich and fruity, with hints of cinnamon and herbs. It pairs well with buttery scones on an afternoon break.

Li Geng, the brand’s manager, said they wanted to create an interesting image for tea drinkers, so they named the brand “Smash A Cup.”

Each box contains 20 tea bags. Boxes are made of a similar recycled paper to the kind used in egg cartons.

The tea bags are free of labels or threads. Li said most tea bags use unsafe glues to connect the label and cotton thread.

Rooibos can be steeped for a long time without going bitter. Drinkers do not need to remove tea bag.

The brand is available at nuandao.com and a couple of independent coffee shops like Coffee Clark and M plus cafes.

Website: smashacup.taobao.com



Liubaocha leaves



Twenty rooibos tea bags, starting from 69 yuan



Each box is made of recycled paper.



The tea is free of strings and labels for the safety concerned.
Photos provided by Smash A Cup



Dark tea is an important local industry that employs older residents.
CFP Photos

Liubaocha

After Pu’er, Liubaocha is the new popular choice among tea collectors. Known for its reddish amber color and light flavor, Liubaocha is a specialty of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

Like Pu’er, Liubaocha can be stored for many years. It’s also a warming tea in Chinese medical theory.

Apart from other healthy effects, Liubaocha aids digestion and cleanses the stomach.

Website: shop104192167.taobao.com

Wines of the Week

Consumer judges name China's best wines



The fifth annual Grape Wall Challenge took place at Temple Restaurant.



Photos provided by Grape Wall of China

By ANNIE WEI
Beijing Today Staff

Consumers sniffed, sipped and scored 21 Chinese wines last Friday as Temple Restaurant Beijing hosted the fifth annual Grape Wall Challenge.

The contest, organized by the blog Grape Wall of China, uses consumers as judges to discover what they like and to increase their confidence in wine. Judges rank each wine as “love it,” “like it,” “dislike it” or “hate it.”

This year's lineup included 16 bottles priced at 150 yuan to stress quality and value.

“This price allows us to find Chinese wines that restaurants, bars and hotels can afford to serve by the glass,” said Jim Boyce, co-organizer of the event.

The wines came from across the country, including Great River Hill from Shandong, Grace Vineyard from Shanxi, Silver Heights, Helan Qing Xue and Helan Mountain from Ningxia, Chateau Hansen

from Inner Mongolia and 1421 from Xinjiang.

The highest-scoring red and white wines priced less than 150 yuan were Grace Vineyard Chardonnay 2011 (72 yuan from Torres or Everwines) and Helan Mountain ‘Premium’ Cabernet Sauvignon 2010 (138 yuan from Pernod Ricard).

Among the wines priced more than 150 yuan, Helan Mountain ‘Special Reserve’ Chardonnay 2011 (268 yuan from Pernod Ricard) and Helan Qing Xue ‘Jia Bei Lan Reserve’ 2011 (790 yuan from Wine Republic) were universally “loved” or “liked.”

When it came to “love,” Silver Heights ‘Family Reserve’ 2011 received the most votes (306 yuan from Torres or Everwines).

The Grape Wall Challenge is a nonprofit event. Temple provides the venue and China Wines and Spirits, East Meets West, Pernod Ricard, Torres, Wine Republic and 1421 provide the wines.

The chair of this year's challenge was Professor Ma Huiqin of China Agricultural University.

The Market



Chengbei market has a hall selling spices.
Photo by Tang Ying

Huilongguan claims title of Beijing's biggest market

By ANNIE WEI
Beijing Today Staff

Huilongguan, one of the largest affordable residential compounds in north Beijing, is never a fun place to be.

But if you want to see a very different Beijing from Sanlitun, Lidu or Guomao, a visit to the Huilongguan market can be quite interesting.

Wang Xiaomao, who likes cooking and shopping for ingredients, visits the market every few months.

“It's fun to shop there with a bunch of housewives,” she said. Vegetables and seafood are fresher than other markets and cost less.

“It's better to drive there so you can really stock up,” she said.

The market has everything as long as you know where to look. However, it can be intimidating for people who are not familiar with the area.

“It's too large,” Wang said. “There is a major thoroughfare between the meat and the spice markets.”

In terms of food markets, most people think of Xinfadi for vegetables, Hongqiao for seafood and Sanyuanli for foreign ingredients. But many of these markets are shrinking or facing demolition.

The Huilongguan market has become the largest and sells things of all sorts, including kitchenware, hardware and secondhand goods.

Huilongguan is the largest residential area and its apartments are constantly changing hands. Most new owners stock up with new furniture and end up selling it all within two to three months, said Wang Hu, a movie producer who lives there.

“You can get some great deals on almost-new furniture,” he said.

Chengbei Huilongguan Trade Market

Where: North side of Huilongguan Xiaoqu, Changping District

Getting There: Take Line 13 of the subway or buses 307, 407, 618, 811 or 919

Open: 9 am – 5 pm

Tel: 8179 6388

Specialties at Duxiaoyue

By ANNIE WEI
Beijing Today Staff

Duxiaoyue, a popular Taiwanese eatery, has been attracting a lot of attention since it opened in Beijing.

While some diners have complained that the taste differs from its Taipei location, Duxiaoyue is worth visiting as one of the best restaurants at Parkview Green.

The restaurant recently released its 2014 menu and *Beijing Today* recommends a few of its dishes you'll find nowhere else in the capital.

Start with a bowl of peppered pork belly soup (26 yuan), a classic, nutritious Taiwanese dish. The belly is stewed four hours until tender before adding other spices.

For a cold dish, we liked the yam and pork (38 yuan). The pork is slightly cooked in salty water and sliced. Between each two pieces of pork is a slice of fresh yam topped with soy sauce, pepper and

chili peppers. The freshness of the yam and greasiness of the pork make a good combination.

Our favorite was the steamed cod with ganshuzi topped with tofu (88 yuan). Ganshuzi is a tropical Taiwanese fruit rarely seen in North China. Its addition gives the dish a light, sweet and sour flavor. The steamed fish and tofu are both tender and taste yummy with ganshuzi sauce.

Sesame oil shrimp (68 yuan) is also highly recommended. Taiwan folks like cooking many dishes with sesame oil and rice wine, and the most famous is sesame oil chicken, a favorite of new mothers. The shrimp version has a different flavor and the sesame oil makes the shrimp taste firmer.

Duxiaoyue

Where: B2 Parkview Green, 9 Dongdaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

Tel: 8563 1105

Yam and pork, 38 yuan



Steamed cod with ganshuzi topped with tofu, 88 yuan



Sesame oil shrimp, 68 yuan
Photos by Wei Ying